



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

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USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTS RURAL NEBRASKA COOPERATIVE

Norfolk, Neb. – February 13 – The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development presented the Small Farms Cooperative with a \$250,000 Value Added Agricultural Product Market Development Grant symbolic funding check today. These funds will assist with technical assistance needed to create a natural meat certification and definition program, to establish the co-op in the emerging European markets and to enter a new NHTC/natural market in the United States.

"Funds from this award will allow the cooperative to cash flow operations during this time of high startup costs," stated Brian Kaczor, president of Small Farms Cooperative. "Entering a new market arena halfway around the world is an expensive venture. This factor coupled with the need to keep producers profitable by adding value to their livestock is a difficult and highly complex assignment."

Small Farms Cooperative of West Point, Nebraska is a marketing cooperative of natural meat products formed in March of 2000. The co-op is comprised of small farms that raise products including beef, pork, bison, lamb and poultry in a natural and humane way as defined by the cooperative's certification standards.

The co-op will be using working capital funds to develop an emerging market for non-hormone treated cattle in the European Union and to enter a new NHTC/natural market in the U.S. Additionally, the establishment of a recognized definition of natural meat and organization of a certification program designed to provide safety assurance to consumers will be undertaken. The USDA Rural Development grant funds will assist in the salary and operating costs of these two ventures as well as the costs of providing technical assistance to the cooperative and its members during the certification process.

"The grant funds will be used to allow the cooperative's small agricultural producer-members a chance to better compete in domestic and international markets," stated Teresa Olander, community development technician for USDA Rural Development. "USDA Rural Development is pleased to be a part of the cooperative's proactive efforts to take hold of the current agricultural situation and increase the income for their members through this value-added meat marketing venture."

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